

Conference Prepares to Gather in Kona

Preparations for the 'Aha Pae'aina of the Hawai'i Conference United Church of Christ are in full swing.

Mokuaikaua Church (pictured below), Hawai'i Island Association and Conference leaders have been working for months to prepare for the annual gathering in Kona, June 5-8. The theme, "God's Vision..." was chosen because it is also the theme of General Synod 29, which will be held in Long Beach, California, this summer.

The 'Aha Pae'aina will officially open with the 'Aha Iki on June 5, when members of Hawaiian churches gather at Mokuaikaua Church.



A special youth gathering will begin on the morning of Thursday, June 6, and end with lunch on Saturday. Each church is eligible to send a youth delegate and is encouraged to send additional youth visitors.

Although most activities will take place within the 'Aha Makua, there will also be special programs and opportunities designed for youth to meet, interact and be inspired by one another. A Facebook page will be created to give youth attending the 'Aha Pae'aina an opportunity to interact via social media before they gather in Kona.

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Meet the General Synod Delegates

Twelve delegates, two from each of the five Associations and two Associate Delegates, will represent the Hawai'i Conference at General Synod 29 to be held June 28-July 2 in Long Beach, California. In the last issue of The Friend we introduced you to four of the delegates. This article introduces you to the remaining six delegates. The two associate delegates will be featured in the next issue of The Friend.



Mele Moala (Kaua'i Association) will attend General Synod as both a youth delegate and a representative of the Kaua'i Association. Mele serves on the Kaua'i Association Executive Board and is also a member of the Youth and Young Adult Standing Committee of the Association.

"I am looking forward to going to my first General Synod because it will be the first time I'll be going to the mainland and it will also be one of the last events I can attend as a youth in the UCC," said Mele. "I am positive it will be a memorable experience that will draw me closer to God as I prepare for college this fall."

Elwood "Woody" Kita (Hawai'i Island Association) is a member of Church of the Holy Cross in Hilo. He has served in many leadership positions in the Association and is a past chair of the Conference Stewardship Missional Team. He currently serves on the Stewardship Missional Team and the Foundation Budget and Finance Committee.



This will be Woody's second trip to General Synod and he is once again looking forward to being immersed in the work of the Synod.

"I look forward to the interactions with people, experiencing the spirituality in all of its processes, receiving updates of the actions and decisions of the previous Synod, and discernment of new resolutions and motions to be presented."



Grale Chong (Association of Hawaiian Evangelical Churches) is a licensed minister at Waiola Church. She has served on the Justice and Witness Missional Team, on the Personnel Committee of the Hawai'i Conference and as Luna Ho'omalua Hope for AHEC. Grale is grateful for the opportunity to represent the Hawaiian churches at General Synod and be part of the UCC in such a large, diverse gathering.

"I've always enjoyed attending the 'Aha Pae'aina but the General Synod is so much bigger!" she said.

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Shifting Focus

by Charles C. Buck, Conference Minister

Like the average runner, I don't run a marathon with the goal of a fast time or great place at the finish. I focus on enjoying the event and crossing the finish line. Of course, I also take an interest in my time and place among the finishers, and I marvel at the results of the elite runners for whom time and place are their focus.



But in the recent Boston Marathon, some four hours after the start, all focus shifted to something else entirely. After two "improvised explosive devices" went off near the finish line, it turned into a race against time to get help for the wounded. Everyone at the scene, both emergency responders, already on-site for the marathon, as well as spectators and even runners themselves, rushed around to locate, comfort and tend to victims of the blast. This was, as someone said, Boston at its best.

After two "improvised explosive devices" went off near the finish line, it turned into a race against time to get help for the wounded.

While no decent person ever wills for horrible things like this to happen, it is usually at times like these that our focus shifts, our priorities set straight, our energies and passions directed toward the things that matter or are most important. Like turning the lens of a camera to bring an object into clarity, shifting focus helps us to remember or re-vision what our goals, values or mission should be. Bostonians remembered the important and enduring values like caring and compassion, community and cooperation—what we Christians call love for God and love for neighbor.

All of us, individuals and organizations, the church included, are prone to forgetting or neglecting the things that matter. We can easily find ourselves focusing too much on the narrow, petty and selfish. This "mission drift" is not usually intentional (except perhaps in places of power), but like driving a car or steering a ship, it requires a gentle course correction now and then.

What usually happens, however, is that we let things go for too long, and then it takes a blast of major proportion to wake

us up, re-focus and get back on course. In churches, the usual catalysts are a pastor's departure, conflict over an issue, loss of a patriarch or matriarch, disaster in the community, or hostile threat from outside.

While traumatic events, indeed, have a tendency to bring out the best and most godly in us, shouldn't we seek to live out the higher and loftier values of God's unconditional love in the in-between times, too?

Instead of shifting sands, where we are tossed around by the winds of fate, forced to react to external events, shouldn't we be relying on shifting our focus constantly to God's will and purpose in all our words and deeds at all times?

What usually happens, however, is that we let things go for too long, and then it takes a blast of major proportion to wake us up, re-focus and get back on course.

At the interfaith service a few days after the Boston Marathon, the city's mayor, Thomas Menino, said, "Love has covered this resilient city. I have never loved it and its people more than I do today....We triumphed over that hateful act."

If we are constantly, in all the things we do and are part of, shifting focus to what matters most, we will find love covering our cities, communities and churches at all times, and not just when big and bad things happen.

*Have you remembered the Hawai'i Conference in your will?
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God is still speaking

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Resolution Would Designate “Kalaupapa Sunday”

Delegates to the 191st ‘Aha Pae‘aina will have an opportunity to consider a resolution that would designate a special “Kalaupapa Sunday” to be observed each year by the member churches of the Hawai‘i Conference. At its April 6 meeting, the Conference Council approved the request of Keawala‘i Congregational Church to place the resolution on the business agenda of the ‘Aha Makua.

A workshop will be scheduled during the ‘Aha Makua to introduce delegates to the resolution and provide a forum for discussion and questions.

If ‘Aha Makua delegates approve the resolution, the Justice and Witness Missional Team will be asked to designate the date for an annual “Kalaupapa Sunday” and provide a worship packet containing hymns, Scripture readings, art, poems, stories and sermons to distribute to member churches in the Conference.

In requesting the designation of a Kalaupapa Sunday, Keawala‘i Church wanted to affirm the importance of faith in the past and the future of Kalawao and Kalaupapa. Historical records show that many of the first patients to the peninsula came from the member churches of what was then the Hawaiian Evangelical Association (now Hawai‘i Conference UCC).

Those patients named their first church Siloama (pictured right), after the healing story in John’s Gospel. The resolution states that this is a reminder to all of the importance of healing in our communities.

“We know that long after a cure was found for Hansen’s disease, the diseases of prejudice and fear remained for many, many years and continues in communities today where Hansen’s disease occurs,” the resolution states.

The timing of the resolution coincides with the decline in the number of patients residing in Kalaupapa today and the urgency to preserve and pass on their stories for future generations. Ka ‘Ohana O Kalaupapa, established in 2003, is a nonprofit organization working to promote the value and dignity of every individual who was exiled to the peninsula. The passage in 2009 of the Kalaupapa Memorial Act authorizing the ‘Ohana to establish a memorial to the over 8,000 persons sent to the peninsula, along with several publications and exhibits commemorating the lives of the patients, are just some of the examples of the work being done to ensure that the Kalaupapa legacy continues into the future. This resolution will include the United Church of Christ in that effort.

Visit www.hcucc.org for a full text of the proposed resolution.



(Meet the Delegates, continued from page 1)

When she attended General Synod two years ago, Grale thought the committee workshops were very interesting. “It was enlightening to learn how the UCC takes part in church and world issues and how we can add our voices to it,” she said.



Aileen Trout (Tri-Isle Association) is a member of Lahuiokalani Ka’anapali Church on Maui. She also serves on the Tri-Isle Church and Ministry Committee, Maui Council of the State Council of Hawaiian Congregational Churches, and Hawaiian Affairs Committee of the Association.

“There’s a ‘warm and fuzzy’ feeling when you participate in General Synod because the event shows that we are linked together with hundreds of delegates and we are all part of the SAME denomination,” she said, speaking of her experience at General Synod 28. “It’s a feeling of one-ness.”

She appreciates the discussions on resolutions and the strong participation of youth. This year she looks forward to seeing the resolutions that will be presented. “These resolutions frame who we are and what we’d like to be globally,” she said. “I look forward to traveling with the Hawai‘i Conference delegation because there is a bond that cultivates us for the future work of our Conference.”

Michael Warren (Hawai‘i Island Association) is a licensed minister serving Kalapana Maunakea Church on Hawai‘i Island. He has held various roles in the Association including President and Vice President, and he has been a member of the Church and Ministry Committees of both Hawai‘i Island Association and AHEC. Michael has served on the Formation Missional Team, is involved with Christian Endeavor and has volunteered as an adult leader for the Hawai‘i Conference youth camps and events for many years, including one year as Camp Coordinator. This will be his first time attending General Synod.



“I am looking forward to meeting others in the wider church, seeing what they are doing in ministry and maybe bring something back for our churches to use,” he said.



Darrel Itano (O‘ahu Association), member of Nu‘uanu Congregational Church, has held many leadership positions in the church. He currently serves on the O‘ahu Association Board of Directors and has assisted on the Association Nominating Committee.

Darrel has attended the ‘Aha Pae‘aina where he was introduced to the Hawai‘i Conference. This has sparked his interest in learning more about the wider church. As a first-time attendee of General Synod, he says he is “looking forward to the overall experience and is hoping to see the bigger picture of the UCC.”

Clergy Retreat Brings Pastors Together to Focus on Spiritual Practices

The Clergy Retreat, hosted by the Hawai'i Island Association, was held at the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel from March 4 to 6, 2013. This year's theme was "Re-visioning Ancient Practices: Almsgiving, Prayer, Fasting," and was led by John Indermark, author, UCC minister, and visiting associate at Church of the Holy Cross (Hilo).



Chaplains Vital to Schools and UCC

A school chaplain is both teacher and minister with the special opportunity to deeply influence the lives of young people. The chaplains of the three schools founded more than a hundred years ago by the forebears of the United Church of Christ in Hawai'i are no exception.

Kamehameha Schools has a trio of chaplains: Kalani Wong, Ruth Farrell and Kordell Kekoa. Wendell Davis is chaplain at Mid-Pacific Institute. And George Scott, Lauren Buck-Medeiros and Josh Hayashi serve at Punahou. Combined, they have more than 75 years of school chaplain experience and minister to more than 12,500 students, faculty, and staff every year.

"There are so many wonderful things about being a school chaplain—working with amazing and energetic students, collaborating with creative and talented colleagues, being a presence during pivotal or tender moments in peoples' lives and being part of conversations that embrace educating the 'heart' as well as the head," said Lauren.

The chapel is the first place where chaplains influence and encourage students.

At Mid-Pacific Institute faculty and staff participate in a twenty-minute chapel service each week. Students are taught Christian values and respect for different cultures and religious beliefs.

"In a multi-faith environment, students are very respectful of other cultures and religious traditions as they discover their own spiritual paths," said Wendell.

Devotion services at Kamehameha Schools are held every other week for high school students and every quarter for elementary students. "Chapel is just one of the ways that our students of all ages get to grow in their faith by participating in the leading of the service," said Kalani. "Through the integration of the Hawaiian language in songs and readings, our students get to practice their culture through their faith."

Punahou chaplains coordinate regular chapel for all grade levels. Chapels can range from worship planned by students to chaplain-led services addressing a broad range of topics and worship styles.

Education and care do not end at the chapel door. All the chaplains work closely with teachers to promote character education and help nurture students as they grow into young adults.

Presently, Mid-Pacific Institute and Punahou complement chapel services with character education programs. Students at Mid-Pacific Institute focus on the theme of "Circle the World with Love," participating in community service projects like raising funds for disaster victims, collecting food and clothing for the houseless, and writing letters to hospital patients and shut-ins.

Punahou fosters responsible citizens of the world by partnering chapel worship with its Luke Center for Public Service. Students are engaged in service learning projects that focus on issues

such as hunger, homelessness, advancing literacy, environmental stewardship and sustainability.

"It's the speaking and the doing—not just the speaking of the Word in chapel, but the doing of the Word," said George. "That's how I see these programs working together."

Kamehameha Schools offers Christian Education classes for all grade levels. There are also Bible studies and prayer groups to foster faith exploration and development and develop a deeper understanding of other cultures and faith traditions.

Among the duties of school chaplains is pastoral care. They are often called on to preside over baptisms, blessings, funerals and weddings. Ultimately, the school chaplain is a compassionate presence among staff, students and their families.

UCC chaplains have one more very important role: to encourage and strengthen the ties with the United Church of Christ.

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resource List

Invest in the Vision: Strengthen the Church

"Invest in the Vision" is the theme for this year's Strengthen the Church special missional offering of the United Church of Christ.



The funds received from this offering are used to fund

new churches, provide opportunities for youth and young adults and nurture current and future leaders.

Half of the money received stays in Hawai'i to support Christian Investment Grants to churches for new ministries. Last year grants were given to three churches to support a summer college intern program and to two events that exposed youth to the wider church: the National Youth Event and a leadership development program at Kalaupapa.

Churches are invited to receive this offering on any Sunday, but the suggested date this year is Pentecost Sunday, May 19. Resources for promoting Strengthen the Church have been sent to churches and are available at www.ucc.org/stc.

News briefs are adapted from *UCC News*, the online news portal for the United Church of Christ. For details on these and other stories, visit www.ucc.org/news.

General Synod Planners Bring Back Theological Reflections

by Anthony Moujaes, adapted

Organizers for the United Church of Christ's General Synod 2013 are reviving a spiritual element of previous Synods this summer in Long Beach, California.

Quinn G. Caldwell and Rita Nakashima Brock have been named theological reflectors for Synod and are charged with linking the spirit to the business during the week-long event from June 28 to July 3.

"Rita and Quinn are two very bright minds who will help illuminate the places where the business aspect of General Synod—the resolutions and the work done in committee and on the floor—meets the theological aspects," said W. Mark Clark, Associate General Minister of the UCC. "General Synod is a combination of business, spiritual reflection and celebration, so bringing back theological reflections will help guide us in understanding how they relate to each other."

Quinn is Pastor at Plymouth Congregational Church UCC in Syracuse, New York. Rita, an ordained minister in the Disciples of Christ, is a theologian and writer on the faculty of Brite Divinity School in Fort Worth, Texas, and is co-director of the school's Soul Repair Center.

UCC Leaders Carry Banner for Marriage Equality to Supreme Court

by Anthony Moujaes, adapted

One thing was very clear on March 26 on the grounds of the U.S. Supreme Court as justices heard the first of two marriage equality cases—the United Church of Christ was present.

The denomination mustered a tremendous show of support from leaders, ministers and members who rallied with their fellow LGBT advocates during an unforgettable day.

"Everybody had the sense that something very historic was taking place," said Michael Schuenemeyer, UCC executive for LGBT concerns.

The Supreme Court heard the Hollingsworth vs. Perry case on March 26, with the justices probing attorneys from both sides on arguments around California's Proposition 8 that ended marriage equality in that state in 2008.

On March 27, arguments were made in Windsor vs. United States on the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) of 1996 that denies federal benefits to same-sex couples.



"I am very proud that so many people, not only from the UCC, but from a whole host of faith traditions, showed their support," Michael said. "People spoke eloquently about what marriage equality means, and the rights and obligations that come with it." Supreme Court justices will likely issue their rulings in late June.

UCC Churches Pledging Earth Care During Mission 4/1 Earth

Written by Connie Larkman, adapted

Easter Monday, April 1, the United Church of Christ began 50 great days of Mission 4/1 Earth—an intentional campaign of earth care and environmental advocacy.



Mission 4/1 Earth encourages congregations to live into a shared commitment to green up, power down, and shout out for Planet Earth. Hundreds of UCC congregations have already pledged to be better stewards of our fragile planet in dozens of energetic and imaginative ways.

The Mission 4/1 Earth initiative has three goals: more than one million hours of engaged earth care; 100,000 tree plantings in the United States and across the globe; and 100,000 letters on environmental concerns addressed to Congress, local lawmakers and local media outlets.

Since the earth care initiative runs from Easter Monday through Pentecost, there's still time to sign on as an earth steward.

To be sure your efforts on the Mission 4/1 Earth tally board are counted, report your earth care hours, trees planted and letters written as often as you like at www.ucc.org/earth/report.html.

Advocacy Work on Gun Reform Prompts White House Invitation

by Anthony Moujaes, adapted

Staff of the UCC's Washington, D.C., office were invited to the White House in March in recognition of UCC efforts to make neighborhoods safer and to protect families from gun violence.

The invitation to stand with other faith groups at a White House briefing came as a pleasant surprise to the group working to further gun reform.

Sandy Sorensen, Director of the UCC office in Washington, D.C., and Michael Neuroth, Policy Advocate for international issues, were among the crowd of interfaith leaders who attended President Obama's news conference about upcoming gun legislation.

"We joined a diverse group of interfaith leaders, law enforcement officers, mayors and mothers of gun violence victims at a White House gathering with President Obama, highlighting the need to strengthen gun violence prevention legislation at this pivotal time," Sandy said.

(Conference Prepares to Gather in Kona, continued from page 1)



The 'Aha Makua will begin on the evening of June 6 with dinner followed by an 'Aha Mele.

'Aha Pae'aina participants will have an opportunity to hear keynote speaker Allan Boesak, former anti-apartheid activist and humanitarian who continues to be deeply involved in global struggles for human rights.

Kristine Tisinger, a mission intern serving in South Africa on behalf of the Global Ministries of the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), will lead a workshop about her work with the Theological Education by Extension College in Johannesburg.

A variety of other workshops building on the theme, "God's Vision..." will also be offered on Friday afternoon. The business session on Saturday morning will include Missional Team reports, approval of the 2013-14 budget, and the consideration of a resolution proposed by Keawala'i Church (see related story on Page 3).

'Aha Iki and 'Aha Makua information has been mailed to churches, and the deadline to register is May 6. Delegates and visitors can register online at www.hcucc.org or by mailing forms with payment to the Conference Office.

A block of rooms has been reserved at the Courtyard King Kamehameha's Kona Beach Hotel, and participants should make reservations directly with the hotel using the reservation form included with registration materials.

Information about the 'Aha Pae'aina is available on the Hawai'i Conference website at www.hcucc.org. Additional documents will be posted on the website as they become available.

(School Chaplains, continued from page 5)

Kamehameha Schools' Deputation Teams are one way that is accomplished. "Students go out to [Hawai'i Conference UCC] churches to share the message and lead our churches in worship," Kalani said. "Through this experience, they learn of the history of these churches and how our denomination has a rainbow of worship styles."

The other chaplains also recognize the importance of emphasizing the historical connections between their school and the UCC.

"As chaplain, I have integrated the importance of this 'historical' connection in all chapels," Wendell said.

The role of chaplain is an important reminder that God is still speaking. And school chaplains are an invaluable link between the UCC and the future of Hawai'i, ensuring our youth receive much more than a strictly academic education.



Highlights from the Website

Go to www.hcucc.org to learn more about these and many more stories from around the Conference.

Pastoral Changes

Larry Walter, Pastor of First United Protestant Church in Hilo, retired on March 31. The Rev. Walter, who has been ordained for 42 years, served churches in Northern California before coming to Hilo in 2003. He and his wife, Debbie, will continue living in Hilo for the near future.

Jayne Ryan Kuroiwa began as Pastor of Windward United Church of Christ on Sunday, March 24. She most recently served as Director of Church Relations and Major Gifts at Cleveland Christian Home in Cleveland, Ohio.

Yading Li resigned as Chinese Language Pastor at First Chinese Church of Christ on February 24. Yading and his wife, Ann, have moved to California.

Conference Council Highlights

On April 6, the Conference Council met to hear reports from around the Hawai'i Conference and to prepare for the upcoming 'Aha Pae'aina.

Among actions taken was a recommendation to 'Aha delegates the consideration of a resolution submitted by Keawala'i Church (Maui) to establish a Kalaupapa Sunday. (See story on Page 3).

The Council also received nominations for Council member positions and elected William Paris to a four-year term on the Conference Foundation Board of Trustees.

At each meeting of the Council, time is reserved for the Members meeting of the Hawai'i Conference Foundation. Foundation members include both Council members and Foundation trustees. In addition to Executive Director Sherman Hee's report, Members discussed the proposed budget for the next fiscal year.

Visit www.hcucc.org to download reports from the meeting.

Thanks to our friends, *The Friend* is free of charge to anyone who requests it. We offer our sincere mahalo to those who have generously given a monetary gift to help defray publication costs. A gift of \$10 will pay for one person's subscription for one year. Gifts may be sent to the Hawai'i Conference UCC, 1848 Nu'uauu Ave., Honolulu 96817.



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May 2013

Around the Conference

Conference Calendar of Events

May 3-4	Kaua'i 'Aha Mokupuni
May 6	Deadline to Register for the 'Aha Pae'aina
May 11	O'ahu 'Aha Mokupuni
May 18	Woman's Board of Missions Annual Meeting
May 19	Strengthen the Church Offering
May 22	Stewardship Missional Team
May 27	Memorial Day Conference Office closed
June 5-8	191st 'Aha Pae'aina
June 5-6	'Aha Iki
June 6-8	'Aha Makua
June 28- July 2	General Synod 29

Tips to Prepare for the 'Aha Pae'aina

The 'Aha Pae'aina is right around the corner! Here are some tips to help you prepare for this important annual gathering of the churches of the Hawaii'i Conference.

- Avoid the late registration fee and register all your delegates by the May 6 deadline. If you miss the May 6 deadline, registrations (with a late fee added) will be accepted only until May 20.
- Don't forget to name a youth delegate!
- All youth (delegates and visitors) are encouraged to be part of the Youth Event.
- Submit your housing registration directly to the hotel by the May 6 deadline.
- Make airline reservations early.
- Download the 'Aha Handbook (beginning May 17).
- Check the website for updates and new information as they become available.
- Review business items prior to arriving.